

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

Discussion Guide

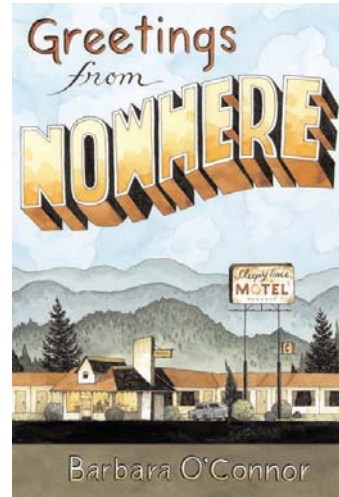
Greetings from Nowhere

by Barbara O'Connor

“O'Connor artfully weaves together the hopes, fears, disappointments, sorrows and joys of her multi-generational cast to produce a warm and satisfying conclusion.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

Reading Level

Grades 5 up



About the Novel

Aggie isn't expecting visitors at the Sleepy Time Motel in the Great Smoky Mountains. Since Harold died, she is all alone with her cat, Ugly, and keeping up with the bills and repairs has become next to impossible. The pool is empty, the garden is overgrown, and not a soul has come to stay in nearly three months. When she reluctantly places a For Sale ad in the newspaper, Aggie doesn't know that Kirby and his mom will need a room when their car breaks down on the way to Kirby's new reform school. Or that Loretta and her parents will arrive in her dad's plumbing company van on a trip meant to honor the memory of Loretta's birth mother. Or that Clyde Dover will answer the For Sale ad in such a hurry and move in with his daughter, Willow, looking for a brand-new life to replace the one that was fractured when Willow's mom left. Perhaps the biggest surprise of all is that Aggie and her guests find just the friends they need at the shabby motel in the middle of nowhere. In Barbara O'Connor's warmhearted novel, a cast of unforgettable characters learns that hope is sometimes discovered in the most unlikely places.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the main setting of the novel. Why is it so important to the events in the story? How does setting influence character and plot?
2. Compare and contrast Willow to Loretta. Which character's life is almost perfect, but not quite? Why? What questions haunt Loretta?
3. Why are Kirby and his mother driving to the Smoky Mountains? Do you think Kirby deserves his destination or not? Why?
4. Aggie is regretting her decision to sell the motel. Have you ever regretted a big decision that you made? Why do you think it is so hard for Aggie to leave this place behind?
5. Explain the importance of the box that Loretta gets in the mail. How does it lead her family on an adventure? What do you think is the meaning behind the items in the box?

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6. How has Kirby's time at the Sleepy Time Motel changed him? Do you consider what he did with Loretta's pin stealing or not? Why? Predict what you think will happen with Kirby in his new school.
7. Why do you think Aggie talks to Harold in the garden? What does she tell him? Why do you think Willow wants Aggie to stay on at the motel?
8. O'Connor is a master of details. Find details that reveal important aspects of each character. (For example, what do Willow's sandals reveal about her).
9. Who do you think has faced the most difficult losses in the book—Aggie, Willow, Loretta, or Kirby? Why? Has everyone lost something?
10. How do these strangers begin to work together? What do they accomplish? How would you help if you were there?



Barbara O'Connor
photo credit: Bill O'Connor

About the Author

Barbara O'Connor is the author of several notable books for children, including *How to Steal a Dog*; *Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia*; and *Me and Rupert Goody*, an ALA Notable Book. She grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and currently lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

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Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her novels.

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This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her Web site at www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of guides to children's books.

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